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THE FIELD OF SPEECH, ITS PURPOSES AND SCOPE IN EDUCATION.

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SPEECH PROFESSIONALS, SPECIALIZING IN THE ART AND SCIENCE OF SPEECH BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION, SHARE THE COMMON ASSUMPTIONS THAT (1) SPEECH IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE OF MAN'S LEARNED BEHAVIOR, (2) SPEECH IS THE HUMANISTIC CENTER FROM WHICH THE SEARCH FOR AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MAN PROPERLY PROCEED, AND (3) EVERY EDUCATED PERSON SHOULD UNDERSTAND AND USE APPROPRIATE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. ALTHOUGH STUDENTS' SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SKILLS LARGELY DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THEIR ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL SUCCESS, A MAJORITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS REMAIN UNTRAINED IN THE FIELD OF SPEECH, AND SPEECH INSTRUCTION ITSELF CONTINUES TO BE LARGELY DISORGANIZED, ERRATIC, AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR. HENCE, PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION MUST PROVIDE AN EXPLICIT AND SYSTEMATIC CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION IN SPEECH PROCESSES AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS AT EVERY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL. (THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE SPEECH TEACHER," VOL. 12 (NOVEMBER 1963), 331-5) (JB)

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THE FIELD OF SPEECH: ITS PURPOSES AND SCOPE IN EDUCATION

S.A.A. Committee on the Nature of the Field of Speech[1]

I

TEACHERS and scholars identified with the academic field of speech label themselves in various ways: speech and linguistic scientists, speech clinician, rhetoricians, students of theatre, teachers of speech. As scientists they seek to understand and describe speech behavior, and the process of communication. As humanists they study the practical and artistic forms of discourse associated with the oral tradition of western civilization. As teachers they transmit the products of their study to students and help them develop effective, responsible, and artistic habits of communication.

The use of the term "speech" to identify an academic discipline emerged in the first two decades of this century. These decades were part of the half century of educational ferment from 1870 to 1920, when many contemporary branches of study were acquiring their current names; for example, English, psychology, political science, and sociology. The first M.A. degree in Speech was granted in 1902, and the first Ph.D. degree in 1922. By 1962 some 150 American universities had granted about 18,000 Master's degrees, and 40 universities had granted approximately 2,300 Doctor's degrees. The national professional society, The Speech Association of America, was founded in 1914 as The National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking.

II

Although its name is a coinage of this century, speech as a field of study grew from an academic tradition as old as the history of western education. The study of the theory and practice of public discussion, under the name *rhetoric,* was a central concern of Greek, Roman, medieval, renaissance, and early modern education. Subjects allied to rhetoric also flourished in the western educational tradition: argumentative dialogue and logical inquiry, usually called *dialectic*; literature which was inseparably linked to rhetoric; and speculative inquiry into the nature and function of language.

Growing thus from a major educational tradition, the field of speech has shared in the unparalleled expansion of knowledge characteristic of this century, and in the specialization of research and instruction. The speech or voice scientist, whose area is sometimes identified as experimental phonetics, is primarily interested in the analysis of speech behavior, viewed as a physiological, acoustic, and linguistic phenomenon. He studies the structure and functioning of the mechanisms of voice and hearing, analyzes vocal production in terms of its acoustic and linguistic structure, and develops instruments and methods of analysis to improve the reliability and objectivity of his data. The speech pathologist and the speech

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therapist center attention on defective speech, its description, etiology, and diagnosis, its personal and social impacts, methods of treatment, and the methods and instruments used in diagnosis and evaluation of therapy. The specialist in educational theatre is partly a creative artist, concerned with playwriting, acting, and directing, and with the visual and auditory aesthetics of theatre. He is partly a teacher and student of dramatic literature and its theory, and of theatre art and its theory. The teacher of interpretation analyzes literature from the point of view of its recreation in speech. He is concerned with the "sound and sight" implicit in the meaning of the literary text, in principles and styles of spoken presentation, and in the history and theory of delivery. The contemporary rhetorician focuses on the practical art of discourse as revealed in the variety of forms and functions evident in public discussion. He is concerned with the history and structure of rhetorical theory, with the history and criticism of public address, and with the relationship between the artifacts of public discourse and their cultural and institutional correlates. As an experimental rhetorician, he may subject hypotheses about the functioning of public discourse to scientific investigation, using experimental methods appropriate to the behavioral sciences. Teachers of radio, television, and the film see their field in terms of rhetorical and theatrical principles and methods as these are applied to, and shaped by, the media of mass communication. They study communication forms and structures as these interact with cultural values.

The field of speech reflects the thrust characteristic of contemporary academic disciplines—a moving out from its original center in expanding segments of specialized study. Speech also reveals, like other fields, increasing interaction with disciplines whose boundaries have widened to include aspects of speech behavior of particular interest to them. Thus today the specialist in speech may find his interests akin to those of the linguist who analyzes the structure of spoken language, the psychologist who studies verbal behavior, the sociologist who relates social structure to symbolic interaction, the anthropologist who studies the structure of speech and language as reflecting the structure of culture, the philosopher who investigates the problems of meaning in everyday language, and so on. The list of specialists in the contemporary world of learning who have become in part or almost wholly concerned with speech is long and growing. To students of the disciplines already mentioned could be added the scholars working in highly specialized aspects of history, literary theory and criticism, psycholinguistics, mass communication theory, biological and medical science, psychiatry, information theory, and the like. Both the dynamics of internal expansion and of increasing interplay with other disciplines emphasize the utility of restating the assumptions which bring together persons whose primary academic home is the field of speech.

III

Despite their manifest specializations, teachers and scholars in the field of speech share assumptions that are reflected in the nature of the courses they characteristically teach and in the nature of their scholarly research. The assumptions most common are these:

(a) Speech is man's most distinctive and significant behavior. Speech is learned, and it is learned from teachers.

The "teachers" include all members of the social groups in which the child moves as well as the persons who give direct attention to speech instruction in formal educational settings. The learning of speech and the form and efficiency of the habits developed are matters of utmost consequence to the individual and his society. Speaking is prerequisite to the child's development of a sense of identity. It is a behavior inseparably linked to the processes of thought and communication. Speech habits mirror the form and quality of one's thought, the nature of his social identifications, and the form and quality of his interaction with his physical environment and with other persons. Speech habits are important to vocational success and effective citizenship. Speech is thus *central* to the nature of man, to the development of the person, and to the functioning of political, economic, and social institutions. It is the most important single feature of the environment within which every individual conducts his life. Behavior of such importance and complexity deserves disciplined study. No one can be said to be knowledgeable about himself and his environment unless he understands speech, its nature, structure, and functioning.

(b) An educated person needs more than an understanding of speech behavior. He should be capable of transmitting his meanings with accuracy, correctness, and clarity. He should be capable of speaking in ways that resolve misunderstanding, that express clear preferences and justify them, that advocate decisions in keeping with his personal integrity and the rights of others, and that aid in adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas. The man who has "the power of summoning thought quickly" and the habit of forceful and efficient expression serves himself well; he who enters effectively and responsibly into public discussion serves the public interest well. The field of speech is still committed to the ideal of the citizen-speaker first set up by the Roman schools, the ideal of the good man speaking well.

In the education of such a man, knowledge and skill meld inextricably. Teachers in their instruction and research recognize this fact. Characteristically, beginning courses in school and college involve students both in the study *of* speech behavior and in directed practice *in* speaking, knowledge serving to shape attitudes and judgment, practice serving to develop effectiveness. Curricula in the college and university respect creative activity, historical study, analysis of concepts and criteria, and critical evaluation of performance. Courses in public speaking, debate, and discussion are balanced by courses in the theory of exposition, argument, and persuasion, in the history and criticism of public address, and in rhetorical theory. Courses in acting, directing, spoken interpretation, and technical theatre are balanced by courses in theatre history, dramatic theory and literature, art and aesthetics. Courses in speech and hearing rehabilitation are balanced by courses in speech science, hearing science, the psychology of speech, and the pathologies of speech, together with their physiological and psychological correlates.

(c) Man cannot avoid being essentially and significantly a communicator. Hence instruction and research in speech focus on the major functions and forms of discourse important to the life of man as a human being, citizen, and artist. The forms characteristic of public discussion in western civilization—public speaking, group discussion, and debate—serve as centers for organizing the kinds of knowl-

edge appropriate to understanding, appraisal, and participation. Behind the forms of public discussion lie the theory of rhetoric, the general theory of signs, symbolic behavior, and communication, and the ways these are related to the structure and function of social institutions. The forms and function of public discourse furnish a rationale for a curriculum in public address, but they limit neither the breadth nor depth of the studies they generate. Often they provide the focus and vitalizing force in a general or liberal education.

The concept of theatre as a significant cultural form provides the center for studies in dramatic literature and aesthetics, and in the theory of performance, direction, design, and visual presentation. The concept of creative activity as man's complete and full response to his problems is at the center of playwriting and play producing. Plays-as-produced offer recurring experiences that constitute for both scholars and participants the final act essential to full understanding and appreciation of theatre art. A similar rationale informs both instruction and participation in radio, television, and film, and in clinical performance in speech correction and audiology.

(d) The acts and arts of communication in speech and language are humanistic. The field of speech has always had a strong and traditionally humanistic point of view. Man's capability and need to symbolize and communicate; his acts of choice, judgment, and expression; his significant and telling acts of communication—these are taken to be the center of a humane study and the center from which the search and transmission of knowledge about man properly proceeds. The enterprise entails discipline, the discipline inherent in the structure of knowledge about speech behavior and the discipline achieved by any man who commands the power of appropriate communication.

IV

A field committed to humane and significant educational purposes has inevitably concerned itself with the nation's system of formal education from the elementary school to the graduate school. The learning of speech begins before formal education, and the development of knowledge about speech behavior and the development of skill in speaking are necessarily continuous processes. At every level of education the speech and language skills of the student both limit and are limited by the kind and extent, the breadth and depth, of the student's knowledge. The growth, refinement, and permanence of communication habits parallel the development of the knowledge built into the process. Hence continuity of instruction in speech is of primary concern in formal education.

The American educational system recognizes the importance of speech instruction, but it has not decided upon the amount and kind that should be generally provided for the common education of Americans. Despite massive evidence to the contrary, the assumption that speaking skill can be expected to develop as a by-product of instruction in reading and writing seems still to be prevalent. In too many schools, instruction in speech is represented only in extra-curricular endeavor.

The disorganized and erratic nature of education in speech has been a matter of deep concern to the Speech Association of America since its founding. The Association has sought to provide through its publications both theoretical guidance and practical curriculum materials for sound programs in speech

education. The twelve-year school curriculum should provide explicit and systematic attention to the study of speech processes and forms, and to the development of speaking skills. For this task, teachers of speech in the elementary school should have specific college preparation. Teachers in the secondary school should have the equivalent of at least an undergraduate minor in the field of speech.

There are problems in staffing and conducting the current curriculum in the English language arts. Most secondary schools require five to six years of instruction in the English language arts in the junior high school and high school curriculum, or from three to four years of such instruction in the four-year senior high school. Since the early part of this century, it has generally been assumed that this sequence in the English language arts includes instruction in the skills of speaking and writing, reading and listening, instruction in the nature of language and in literature. Yet *as a rule* teachers prepared within college departments of English have received little instruction in speech and language behavior and the arts of public discussion. The result is an anomaly: a school curriculum in the language arts which assumes instruction in speech but which is taught for the most part by teachers with little or no preparation in speech. The situation has serious consequences. Innumerable graduates of the common schools have practically no knowledge of speech behavior and of the arts of communication, only the most superficial acquaintance with any of the "literature" of public address and discussion, and no experience at all in rhetorical analysis and appraisal. Large numbers of graduates face a variety of situations requiring ready speech with powers far under their abilities. Such an attentuated and unbalanced treatment of the study of language and the development of language skills is a most serious problem in American education. Teachers of speech and English must recognize their related problems in the curriculum in the English language arts and confront them cooperatively.

V

For the better part of 2,000 years, the education of western Europeans and Americans centered on the language studies of rhetoric, dialectic, and grammar, appropriately supported by the study of the history of public address and of creative literature. The field of speech, as it has come to be known in the twentieth century, is a lineal descendant of the linguistic tradition of classical learning. In a century of expanding knowledge and increasing specialization of study, the field seeks not only to encourage the education of young people in the arts and sciences of spoken discourse, but also to add appropriately to man's understanding of speech behavior and to promote the effective intercommunication of ever increasing knowledge.

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